TL985

Help Flores Earthquake Victims

in the name of East Timor

From the East Timor Action Network/US

December 15, 1992

Flores is the island just west of Timor, and shares its Catholic religion and some of its Portuguese colonial history. The earthquake and tidal waves this week killed many times as many people as the massacre at Santa Cruz Cemetery last year. Reports put the earthquake death toll at up to 4,000. We need to support the survivors of both tragedies.

The East Timor Action Network/US is encouraging people to donate to the victims of the earthquake to show that although we oppose Indonesian government policy, we support the people of Indonesia. ETAN/US will accept contributions and forward them to an appropriate Indonesian non-governmental organization for the victims of the Flores catastrophe.

Tax-deductible checks to "WESPAC Foundation/Flores- should be mailed to

East Timor Action Network/US
P.O. Box 1182
White Plains, NY 10602 USA
Phone 914-428-7299 Fax 914-428-7383 Email cscheiner@igc.apc.org

We also encourage contributions directly to relief organizations, but by channeling it through ETAN (we will not take any of this money), you can help the people of East Timor as well as those of Flores. Below are extracts from news reports and appeals.

Flores A Vast Cemetery

(Maumere, Reuter, December 14. By Menuk Suwondo)
A killer earthquake triggered treetop-high tidal waves that ripped infants from their mothers' arms and turned parts of Indonesia's "Isle of Flowers" into a cemetery, survivors said on Monday.

At least 1,226 people are confirmed dead and hundreds are missing after the quake, which measured 6.8 on the Richter scale, hit Flores island in eastern Indonesia on Saturday.

On Maumere's outskirts, survivors said tidal waves swamped their fishing village three times and swept many of the hamlet's 2,000 residents away in a hot gush of water.

"The second wave was as high as a coconut tree," fisherman Patamu, 30, said. "The waves were hot, like lava."

Patamu, his wife and two children were swept out of their hut by the waves and thrown onto a hill where he joined other survivors to put up crude tents for cover.

The hot waves of death took a 10-day-old girl named Marina out of her mother's arms. Miraculously, she was pulled from the swirling waters by a neighbour and restored to her mother.

Others were not so lucky. Observers on an aircraft passing over Babi island saw no signs of life among the fishing colonies ringing its once-pristine, now-mud-fouled beaches.

Johannes Uda, a teacher in a vocational school in Maumere, suddenly felt his legs giving way under him about midday on Saturday.

"I then saw everyone on the streets suddenly also going on their knees. I then realised it was an earthquake."

Stumps of walls, with iron girders sticking out, and roads with deep cracks testify to the fury of the earthquake.

Tents have been put up outside the hospital to treat patients afraid of entering because of cracks in the walls.

Lines are forming in the town at food distribution centres. Even drinking water is scarce at these centres.

Few cars are on the streets and people walk about in a daze, many searching desperately for their families. "I don't even know if they are alive," said a man pausing in his tearful search for his two children.

Rescue teams who searched the island for victims on Monday feared an epidemic among survivors. "We are badly in need of medicine, tents and volunteer relief workers," said Herman Gadidjou, aide to East Nusa Tenggara governor Hendrikus Fernandez.

Fernandez said the tents and medicine were needed to protect people from diseases like pneumonia, respiratory

diseases and gastroenteritis, with the onset of the rainy season.

President Suharto ordered the navy on Monday to help in relief operations. Troops and civilians are also expected to boost the ranks of the rescue workers.

The tragedy was the latest to hit the earthquake-prone region. A series of tremors hit eastern Indonesia last year, killing at least 22 people and badly damaging property.

The last major earthquake to hit the country was also in the east, in Irian Jaya in 1989. The quake triggered landslides that killed 97 people.

Until midday on Saturday, Flores was known mainly for its colourful Roman Catholic religious festivals, its coral and its flowers.

Now most of the flowers around Maumere have vanished. Only a few purple bougainvillea poke up from the rubble and dark brown mud.

Toll Could be 4000 Deaths

(UPI, Jakarta, December 14) Aftershocks rumbled through Indonesia's ravaged Flores island and nearby smaller islands Monday, rocking the region where more than 2,000 people have been confirmed killed by a devastating weekend earthquake and accompanying tidal waves.

H. Fernandez, governor of East Nusa Tenggara province, Monday cited 1,584 deaths in a report to the central government in Jakarta.

Hours later, officials confirmed 600 additional deaths on a tiny island located just off Flores island. One official said the islet had been "sunk for a short period of time" by the tidal wave that "swept and flattened everything ..."

The *Suara Pembaruan* newspaper meanwhile reported the death toll could climb as high as 4,000.

"It even could be higher, as there still are many bodies and missing people to be found by rescue teams," one official told the newspaper. "The bodies were being found under scattered debris or after being wiped away by the tidal wave."

In another development, military commanders said soldiers would be deployed to Flores island - some 1,175 miles east of Jakarta - to rebuild destroyed houses. Officials have estimated about 40,000 residents were left homeless when their houses collapsed in the quake or were swept off by the sea.

Two aftershocks shook the Flores town of Maumere Monday morning, triggering more panic among people whose homes collapsed and are now living in plastic tents, the official news agency Antara said.

Rab Sukamto, director of the government-sponsored geology directorate, warned survivors "to remain on alert" for aftershocks. He said officials were sent to Flores with equipment to survey the source of the tremor and check for signs of more seismic activity.

The initial quake, which registered 6.8 on the Richter scale, shook islands in East Nusa Tenggara province shortly after noon Saturday, triggering tidal waves and collapsing thousands of houses, shops and government buildings.

The quake was the most harmful in Indonesian history, an official said.

"I saw everywhere only scattered debris," said one villager who just returned home from outside the town of Maumere on Flores island. "It looks like just after a war."

One official said more than 90 percent of buildings in Maumere were destroyed, forcing the homeless to move into plastic tents. Rescue workers continued searching for more victims under the debris of collapsed buildings.

The quake triggered a 80-foot tidal wave and sent sea waters as far as 1,000 feet inland, sweeping houses and other buildings in Maumere and on the two islands on the northern coast area.

Landslides also occurred in several place on Flores, which is home to more than 1 million residents, mostly Catholics.

President Suharto on Monday expressed condolences to the families of the victims and ordered on officials "to immediately to begin planning the reconstruction of public facilities, such as schools and public hospitals."

State Secretary Murdiono told reporters that Suharto also called for immediate efforts to begin distributing supplies of food, clean water and medicine in the affected areas.

One survivor, Mohammad Salahu, told Jakarta's Kompas newspaper he saw about 50 bodies stuck on trees on the tiny inundated island off Flores.

Flores Quake Relief Effort

From Alex Wijoyo, via PeaceNet

You may have heard from the news media that recently an earthquake has hit severely the Island of Flores, East Indonesia. The exact death toll rises day by day.

The Paroki-net, meaning "Parish-net" – a network for Indonesian students abroad, mostly Catholic, but is also open to Indonesian students of other religions – is making an appeal for money to help relieving the suffering people in Flores.

The Paroki-net (paroki@uiuc.edu) can channel your contribution. Checks or money order can be sent to the Paroki-net's Relief Effort Committee:

Mr. Teddy Setya
3307 Powelton Apt 3F
Philadelphia, PA 19104 USA

For accounting purpose, we ask you to report your contribution to: Mr. Parulian Sihotang (internet address: pxs29@po.cwru.edu). He will record your contribution and send you an acknowledgment upon receipt.

Thank you for your kind help.

Sincerely, Alex Soesilo Wijoyo, S.J.

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